

Negative Capability of Tolerance – the Assassination of Hitoshi Igarashi*

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lisânu-l-hâli afsahu min lisânî
wa-samt'î 'an su'âlî turjumânî

al-Hujvîrî, *Kashf al-Mahûb*

On the morning of July 12, 1991, Hitoshi Igarashi, a Japanese professor, aged 44, was found stabbed to death in a building of the Tsukuba University campus, 37 miles northeast of Tokyo. The news circulated rapidly throughout the world, as the victim was the Japanese translator of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*. One year has passed since Igarashi's murder, and the perpetrator is still at large, the case lacking any clue to its solution. The only circumstantial evidence that the police withheld from the public was a nostradamic quatrain composed by Igarashi. The enigmatic verses, left on his office desk, suggested that an assassination would take place "near the staircase". And his body was actually found near the staircase in the hallway outside his office.

These circumstances, however, do not allow us to suppose that his death should be directly connected with Âyatullâh Khomeinî's *fatwa* ordering the faithful to kill all those who committed themselves to the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. Indeed, the translators were not explicitly included among "those who are responsible for the publication" in the original *fatwa*. Nonetheless, Igarashi was quite aware of the fact that he was one of the "targets" and would be attacked (Igarashi 1991: 150). And yet, he had declined the security cover proposed by the police. Was it a sign of

adventurism? By analysing his case I would like to demonstrate a crucial dilemma inherent in cross-cultural communication and mutual understandings.

Igarashi's assassination was immediately welcomed by some Moslem authorities in Japan and abroad, including Tehran: "good news for Moslem people" (Salam, July, 14. 1991). The "killing is entirely justified" Moslem leader Sayed Abdul Quddus from Bradford is reported to have answered to *The Sun* (London, July 15.1991), because "people translating the book are also insulting the faith."

Already in 1989, the Islamic Center in Japan "requested publishers, newspapers, magazines and broadcast stations not to translate or reproduce the novel," which it called an "anti-Islamic" work that "contains filthy remarks and ridicules fundamental beliefs of Islam" (*International Herald Tribune*, July,13-14.1991). When the Japanese translation appeared in spite of these oppositions, Adnan Rashid, aged 30, of Pakistan tried to attack the publishing promoter, Gianni Palma, in a press conference held at the Foreign Press Club in Tokyo on February 13, 1990. He was immediately arrested and jailed for one year (but afterward allowed to return to Pakistan by the Japanese authority).

In the same conference Mr. Raees Siddiqui, President of the Islamic Association of Pakistan in Tokyo, publicly "threatened" Mr. Palma (and probably also the translator who was at his side) to death: "Vous avez insulté un milliard de musulmans travers le monde. Votre action relève du terrorisme, nous ne vous laisserons pas vivre." (*Libération*,14 July 1991).

Interviewed after the murder of professor Igarashi, Mr. Siddiqui confirmed his opinion: "Igarashi deserved to die. All the Moslems are insulted by the translation of *The Satanic Verses*. The publication [in Japanese] was a scandal and his death is nothing but an inevitable consequence." (*Shukan Bunshun*, July 25, 1991) "The book was judged as insulting Islam by our authorised religious teachers. How can one oppose this judgement? And moslems are all over the world. So the assassination was inevitable. And that's

why I have asked to stop the publication of the Japanese translation (...) He was punished by God." (*Shukan Asahi*, July 26, 1991: both quotes are our retranslation from Japanese texts).

These statements, though fragmentarily reported, indicate that the local Islamic Shi'ite leaders were simply repeating the commonsense interpretation of Khomeini's fatwa: as community leaders, how could these Moslem representatives in Japan behave otherwise? They feared their compatriots' reactions; they had to take into account the susceptibilities of the more than 30 000 non-Japanese Moslems in Japan: "The Japanese do not respect the religion of other people. They have to learn a lesson from Igarashi's death." (*The Guardian*, 13 July 1991). Not only in Japan but also in most of the so-called developed countries, Middle-Eastern immigrant workers find themselves racially discriminated against and ill-treated by the host culture in which they live. We know that, apart from political manipulations, their resentment was also one of the backgrounds of the Bradford book-burning of Rushdie's novel in England on January 14, 1989, which ultimately fueled religious riots and killings both in India and Pakistan, and eventually resulting in Khomeini's fatwa on Feb. 14, 1989.

Around Igarashi's death two antagonistic opinions have been formulated. On the one hand, we find Western condemnation of the criminal attack on human liberty and expression; on the other, some Islamic reactions applaud the "execution" as justice done in the name of Islam. One Iranian group even claimed responsibility for the "execution." The Mojahedin Hark, an outlawed dissident organisation in Iran, published a statement suggesting the Iranian government's involvement in the assassination. However, the Japanese press has refrained from commentary, reporting only "events" and offering possible hypotheses, as the background of the case was (and still is) unclear. (We can even suppose that any diplomatic inconvenience with the Iranian government would prevent Japanese authorities from further police investigations).

Among these reactions a question remains: why did Igarashi undertake the translation of such a controversial work? If he had been a simple translator of English literature into Japanese, his death would be regarded merely as one of the "deaths of innocent people," as Salman Rushdie put it in his condolences to Igarashi's family. But the position Igarashi has occupied in Islamic studies in Japan seems to be too complicated to warrant speaking of him as a completely innocent victim.

Born in 1947 in Niigata City, Hitoshi Igarashi was one of the leading Islamic scholars in Japan. Igarashi studied from 1976 to 1979 at the Royal Philosophical Academy in Tehran with such authorities as Toshihiko Izutsu and Henri Corbin. Although officially invited as a research fellow by the government of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlevi, Igarashi had to struggle with administrative corruption, which allowed him insight into the realities of the economic crisis people in Tehran were suffering from. Igarashi ironically recalled: "As research fellow at His Majesty's Institute, I was a victim of the Iranian Revolution, but at the same time, I was also a criminal among those who stupidly wasted the tax paid by the sweat of Iranian people" (Igarashi 1989: 11). Having spent half a year under the Islamic Revolution, which he closely observed, Igarashi left Iran on September 1979 with the Izutsus on the last special flight prepared by Japan Air Lines to rescue remaining Japanese citizens before the embargo was put into effect.

Though talented in mathematics since childhood, Igarashi was essentially a philologist, quoting easily from Shakespeare as well as from ancient and medieval philosophers. He mastered about 15 languages, including Arabic and Persian, and was also famous for his love of singing. He is known to have seized every opportunity to recite foreign songs in the original from "Deutsche Lied" to Russian folk songs. His large repertoire of Japanese popular hits was legendary and he even organised several public concerts of American hard-rock at the Tsukuba University Festivals, assuming the role of leading vocal singer.

With his return to Japan, Igarashi's prolific writing began. Immediately after his escape from Iran, he wrote within two months an account of the Islamic Revolution as he witnessed it: *Experience in Iran* (1979). His second publication in this direction was a warning message to the Japanese administration's misunderstandings in the Middle-East affairs. According to Igarashi, the danger consisted in Japan's blind dependence upon Western presses and Washington political decision-makers: *How to Grow up with the Middle East* (1983). In the same year, he also published a study of classical and medieval philology: *Chain of Knowledge, Greek-Islam Symposium* (1983), including medical, mathematical, theological and rhetorical studies. Then came a study of "comparative sociology in ethno-musicology" based on his field work during the Islamic Revolution: *Climates of Music* (1984); followed by two Islamic studies *Islam Renaissance* (1986) and *Ecriture du mysticisme* (1989). The latter discusses Sohrevardi, Mallarmé, Chinese Taoist Laozi and a Japanese Buddhist monk, Ryokan (1758-1831). As a comparativist, he also wrote *Civilizations in Conflict* (1989), a critical discussion of the Europeanization of Japan in the 19th Century treating such historical figures as Mori Ogai (1862-1922), Yoshida Shiin (1830-1859) and Kawai Tsugunosuke (1826-1868).

Among several translations (including a study of Islamic mysticism by Christian Jamb, realised in collaboration with his wife) was *The Canon of Medicine of Ibin Sînâ* (1980). This translation was accompanied by a systematic study, *Oriental Medicine and Wisdom, a Study in Ibin Sînâ*, (1989), considered to be his masterpiece. It is clear, says his widow, that from the materials left piled up on his office desk, he was planning to return to his master's thesis on Plato's aesthetics in order to further develop the idea of *The Structure of Prophecy*, which was to have been published in a full-length book of more than 400 pages. He also dreamed of translating into Japanese *The Complete Work of Ibin Sînâ*.

Since the Iran-Iraq war Igarashi had published many reports of complicated political and economic situations in the Middle-East and had served as a special adviser to the Kaifu government

during the Gulf crisis in 1990. He wrote, "The Arab is needed but the oil ("abura" in Japanese) is not needed." This ironical slogan – the pure antithesis to the Japanese Government's commonsense – was not taken seriously by the MITI (see his last book published only one month before his death: *The Misunderstanding of the Middle-East leads up to Japan's Misfortune*, 1991).

Among these multiphasic and somewhat divergent endeavors, the translation of Salman Rushdie's novel was not so much an important scholarly achievement as a highly intellectual entertainment for Igarashi. The complexity of Rushdie's prose, with its intricate cultural background, tempted Igarashi to prove his unequaled talent in English. Whether his death is connected with the novel or not, no Japanese scholar conversant with Igarashi's work and career would want him to be remembered only as someone who died as the Japanese translator of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*.

Yet the fact remains that Igarashi consciously took charge of the translation of the controversial novel which five other Japanese translators had already declined for technical or other reasons (if not in support of Teheran's condemnation to Rushdie). Did he, then, take on the risk for the purpose of self-aggrandizement? Or did he want to make a point about freedom of expression in the face of the so-called "Islamic fundamentalist terrorism"? Before answering these questions, however, it would be necessary to give a general account of the way *The Satanic Verses* was received – or rather was not really accepted – in Japan.

At first, it must be pointed out that the major Japanese publishing companies and booksellers, as well as best-seller publishers were reluctant to be involved in the antagonism between Western 'justice' and Moslem fundamentalists' protest. Some Japanologists observed that controversy between religious conviction and freedom of expression, typical in monotheistic cultures, remains quite foreign to the so-called secular and pantheistic Japanese climate (Igarashi once refuted from his theological point of view such kind of cultural determinism based on a schematic binary opposition between pantheism and monotheism: see

Igarashi 1986: 159-85). Nonetheless, speaking ill of others' (non-Japanese) religious convictions is to be counted among the implicit taboos in Japanese news media, and few Japanese intellectuals were motivated to take part in an ideological discussion with which they remained unfamiliar, and unwilling to be embroiled in.

Generally speaking, it was only out of curiosity, mingled with some suspicion, that Japanese readers took some interest in the novel's content, but the "crime" the author is said to have committed remained beyond their comprehension. Some of them found the novel tedious, intricate and impenetrable, no more a major literary achievement than a sacrilege to Islam. Clearly, the publication of *The Satanic Verses* was not unanimously regarded in Japan as the ultimate symbol of freedom, as was the case in the United States. For "ordinary Japanese" people the Emâm Khomeinî's *fatwa* was no more comprehensible than the Western campaign's "hysterical reaction", insisting on the publication of the novel at any cost, as if freedom of expression would otherwise be lost once for all. This Japanese incomprehension, of course, added fuel to Islamic rage as well as Western irritation.

Under these circumstances, it was therefore evident from the beginning that *The Satanic Verses* would not become a best-seller in Japan. If Igarashi had aimed at self-aggrandizement, he could have chosen easier projects than the painstaking labor of translation, which simply wouldn't 'pay'. Instead, it was this kind of unconcerned attitude toward the Rushdie affair by the Japanese media that Igarashi found irresponsible. At the time of Igarashi's death, it is reported that only about 60,000-70,000 copies had been sold. By Japanese standards (in which a bestseller often sells more than one million copies), *The Satanic Verses* was a minor success for Shisensha, a minor book distributor which, by the way, greatly suffered from a ban placed on the distribution and publicity of their books. Their "courageous" publication seemed to be regarded as "troublesome" and was welcomed by public indifference and the Japanese government's unconcern.

At the moment of publication of the Japanese translation, both The Japan Publishers' Association and The Japan Pen Club refrained from officially supporting the publication, although they had been requested by their Western headquarters (The International Publishers Association in Geneva and The International Pen Club) to demonstrate their solidarity. In Japan, where blindly following "Western" (i.e.: American) public opinions is synonymous with respecting international justice, this hesitation, if not lack of decision-making, was already a sign of rare confusion.

In contrast to such Japanese reticence, strong support came from abroad. The publishing promoter, Gianni Palma, received more than 50 letters encouraging a publication of the Japanese translation. But these Western individuals and institutions who sent the letters would, ironically, have no more possibility of reading Japanese translation than the late Âyatullâh Khomeinî himself. The American Journalists' Association, for example, which had strongly advocated freedom of expression and which had accused Iran of "terrorism", "highly esteemed the courage" of the Japanese publishing promoter. But, as we already know, this publishing promoter in Japan was not a Japanese citizen but a man of Italian nationality. Convinced of the cause of the freedom of expression and publication, Gianni Palma directly obtained the copyright from the novelist, after one of the main Japanese publishers had given up its own promotion. "International" (i.e. Western) opinion in support of the Japanese translation discounted the Japanese public, whose own opinions were not significantly given voice. But could the publication in Japanese of *The Satanic Verses* be regarded as a simple accessory to "American propaganda", as one Tehran source put it, with some reason? Did Igarashi himself fully share Gianni Palma's opinion?

At this point it is perhaps necessary to recapitulate Igarashi's position concerning the freedom of expression. There is indeed a slight but fundamental difference between the Italian publishing promoter and the Japanese translator. If Gianni Palma firmly defended the cause of liberty in expression, after having been attacked at the press conference, Igarashi, in his turn, explicitly de-

clared in one of his essays that it was not in the name of freedom of expression, about which he had reservations as a student of Islam, that he had accepted the translation work (Igarashi 1990: 6-7).

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, according to Western secular political philosophy. But Igarashi rejected blind acceptance of this idea and proposed to go to the root of the matter. As a sympathizer of Islamic "radical" thought, and by definition fundamentalist (in the etymological sense of "radix"), he agreed with Islamic countries who opposed ratification of the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. He invokes their arguments as follows.

First: the first phrase declaring that "all human beings are born free and equal" is already false; it should be modified to read "all human beings *should be* born free and equal" because it is a plain fact that human slavery and inequality still exist in the world.

Second: from the Islamic point of view, it is arrogant to declare such a right without paying due respect to its source: God Almighty. According to this logic of theocracy v.s. democracy, current international laws could lose their priority (Igarashi, "The Affair of *The Satanic Verses* – or how to 'internationalize' Islam", *Gendaishiso*, Nov. 1989, 154-55; reprinted as post-face to Igarashi's Japanese translation of *The Satanic Verses*, 1989-90, 2 vols.).

As far as I know, no other person in defense of Rushdie's novel so openly criticized the Western Cause of liberty of expression and human rights as Igarashi did. Yet by doing so, Igarashi strayed away from his subject-matter¹. Those two points have logically nothing to do with Rushdie's defense, as far as Igarashi's own discussion is concerned. And invalidating the Western argument from the Islamic point of view does not necessarily fortify Igarashi's competence in defending Rushdie. It only makes clear that there is an irreconcilable confrontation between Western secular legality and Islamic law (*Sharia*). How could Igarashi, then, plead Rushdie's cause despite his agreement with the Islamic refusal to human right and freedom of expression?

We now turn to the second part of Igarashi's declaration: "It was not in the name of freedom of expression – which is still to come in the future – but in the value of the novel itself as literature, which I appreciate highly, that I decided to take charge of the translation." (Igarashi 1990: 6) At first glance, shifting the problem from the cause of liberty to the cause of literature seems to be a wise way of avoiding involvement in the irreconcilable conflict between the Western idea of freedom and the Islamic conception of sacrilege. But this tactic seems to lead to another crucial problem.

Let's examine here closely Igarashi's opinion by summarizing his papers published on several occasions ("Why did I translate *The Satanic Verses*?" *Chuokoron*, April, 1990; "Dear Âyatullâh Khomeinî – letter from a reader of *The Satanic Verses*", *Peace and Religion*, Nr. 8, 1989; reprinted in Igarashi 1990: 4-21; 41-59; see also "The Affair of *The Satanic Verses*", *Eureka* [special issue on The Rushdie Affair], Nov., 1989: 146-163). Apparently clear-cut and straightforward in its detail, his logic is difficult to grasp as a whole:

It would have been enough for Islamic teachers, Igarashi says, to read the novel carefully in order to dispel suspicion regarding the author's alleged evil intention toward the Islamic faith. The two principal charges, i.e. a doctrinaire violation incurred by leaving the protagonist Mahound (pejoratively suggesting Muhammad, The Prophet) deceived by a false prophecy of polytheism, and a moral insult to the prophet's wife Aisha, described as a prostitute are, according to Igarashi, simply baseless: such descriptions simply cannot be found in the text. Moreover, if such allegations were valid, he maintains, Shakespeare could have been convicted of treason for the opening of *Richard III*, or Dostoevsky convicted of the instigation to murder for Raskol'nikov's discourse in *Crime and Punishment*, in which he justifies the killing of an old moneylender lady (Igarashi 1990: 6)

Then, Igarashi tries to distinguish religious authority from the validity of its judgment. It is one thing, Igarashi argues, that the Emâm Khomeinî is entitled to pronounce a death sentence on anti-Islamic acts, but it is another if the author of *The Satanic Verses*

deserves the sentence of death. Even if the book is disgusting for Islam, it does not justify unconditional massacre. "If 'an eye for an eye' is the Islamic principle of justice, then 'a pen for a pen' must be an appropriate measure of recompense in the Rushdie Affair", he remarks (Igarashi 1990: 19). It is true that Plato expelled poets from the Republic, it is also true that poets are by definition somewhat heretic in Islam, but it is unfair that a novelist is made a scapegoat for political purposes without due examination of his literary text. Then comes Igarashi's typical wit: "I recommend to Emâm Khomeinî to 'execute' the novelist in the novelist's own dream instead of encouraging a real assassination, because the novelist did not commit the alleged 'crime' in the real world but only in a 'dream' described in his fiction" (Igarashi 1990: 59).

Igarashi introduces an invocation in his "apologia" (Igarashi 1990: 5): it is true that "a play within a play" or a "chinese box" rhetoric, as well as crude insinuations regarding the *Qur'an* would not please Moslems, since the *Qur'an* declares that "persecution (i.e. temptation to evil) is more grievous than slaying" ("al-fitnatu ashaddu min al-qatli", *Al Qur'an*, II-191; Igarashi 1990: 16, 49). But "Islam cannot be such a frail creed that it is seriously damaged by such fantastic fictional innuendos (if any)" (Igarashi 1990: 19). The novel cannot be harmful either to Moslem or to non-Moslem. "Non-Moslems simply cannot see what's wrong with it; for Moslems, it's enough to overlook it as a simple joke in order not to be corrupted by it" (Igarashi 1990: 56). "Those Moslems who take advantage of the death sentence simply to satisfy their resentment are running the risk of damaging Islam (...). Was not Islam a more tolerant and healthier religion? Here is the regret of a student who has passionately studied the once glorious Islamic religious heritage" (Igarashi 1990: 19).

In short, Igarashi concludes, the novel is not so much a fictitious malicious parody of the *Qur'an*, as the spiritual record of a frustrated exile who, in his love and hatred – balanced between the homeland he rejected and the unfamiliar Old Empire where he is now confined – has composed a sort of reversal of E.M. Foster's *Passage to India*. Not only a fiction, as Rushdie's own de-

fense reasons, but his novel represents one of the dimensions of Islam. With its paradoxically fertile potentiality, the novel finds its place at the extreme limit of the sphere of English literature (Igarashi 1990: 6, 20, 56).

With this estimation, Igarashi believed to have refuted the allegations raised by the *Fatwa* concerning the charge of criminality of Rushdie's novel. He did not make this judgment according to Western justice but by interpreting the text itself in the light of Islamic inner logic. Despite its originality and its rich detail, though, I find his basis of argumentation unconvincing:

First of all, the question of truth or falsehood is not relevant to "the play within the play" structure, as the famous paradox demonstrates: A speaker declares that all the Cretans are liars, and then adds that he himself is from Crete. By the same token, if on the one hand it is maintained that the fiction is innocent of criminal intent because it's only fiction, and if on the other, it is maintained that the fiction is intolerable because it covers up hidden intentions of insult, how can one judge rightly between the two? All depends on the perspective from which one judges. But who is authorized to make such judgment?

Secondly, therefore, such judgment cannot be considered either relevant or irrelevant in its own right. The *fatwa's* validity does not depend on whether Khomeinî's personal judgment was justified or not, but it depends on the fact that the sentence was pronounced by the authorized Emâm Khomeinî who incarnates the criteria of judgment itself. Therefore, from the outset, it was simply 'irrelevant' to discuss the 'relevance' of Emâm Khomeinî's initial allegation toward Salman Rushdie.

Igarashi seems to have forgotten James L. Austin's famous observation: "I see the vessel on the stocks, walk up and smash the bottle hung at the stem, proclaim 'I name the ship the *Mr. Stalin*', and for good measure kick away the chocks; but the trouble is, I was not the person chosen to name it (Austin 1962: 23). It is one thing to present a personal judgment; it is another if this judgment is recognized as socially valid. As a secular student of Islam, Igarashi remains outside of the sphere of the religious law. He is

not religiously authorized to give any relevant judgment within Moslem community; from the beginning, he had no competence to question the allegations against Rushdie. His judgment, relevant in its own right was completely irrelevant to Islamic jurisprudence, as a “performative utterance”, to use Austin’s terminology.

From the sociological point of view, – and from this point of view alone – it was no use trying to prove Rushdie’s innocence in the light of Islamic criteria. Igarashi’s conviction that he could prove the irrelevance of Rushdie’s death sentence simply by referring philologically back to the original text seems to be an oversimplification of the whole matter. Why was he not aware of this?

The irony here is that his competence and authority as a secular Islamic scholar rests upon his total incompetence and lack of authority as a real mediator in religious matter. To use a mathematical metaphor Igarashi would have liked, he was caught in a Russellian paradox of typology: he can judge the matter because he is not admitted in the group he is treating. Igarashi’s behavior is “eccentric”, in Groucho Marx’s sense: “I refuse to belong to any club that would have me as a member.”

Why could Igarashi, despite his specialized knowledge of Plato’s philosophy, wittgensteinian linguistics, medieval rhetoric and the sociology of sciences, develop such a defective discussion, putting aside all the extra-literary side effects, which constituted the “affaire”, and the mechanism of which he would know very well? In order to answer this question, it is now necessary to examine Igarashi’s general conception of the affair. He asks to take into consideration the following three points:

1. What is the legal foundation in Islamic Law of Khomeinî’s *fatwa*, which is equivalent to the death sentence?

2. What is a possible solution to the discrepancy between Islamic Law and the Western international regulations in the present nation-state system?

3. To determine the legality of the death sentence pronounced to the author of *The Satanic Verses*, isn’t it necessary to offer a literal analysis of the text itself? (*Eureka*, Nov., 1989: 147).

According to Igarashi, Western critics did not pay enough attention to the first two points, whereas Islamic Shi'ite fundamentalists overlooked the third point and pronounced the death sentence on Salman Rushdie "without following the due process" (Ibid.; Igarashi 1990: 49). In his effort to absolve the novelist, Igarashi, therefore, concentrated his effort mainly on the third point, as we have already seen. How about, then, the first two points?

The first problem resides in Igarashi's judgment on the "validity" of Emâm Khomeinî's *fatwa* in connection with Iran's geopolitical position in international relations among Middle Eastern and South Asian countries. In his discussion of the political effect of Khomeinî's *fatwa*, Igarashi meticulously demonstrated the legitimacy and the limit of the Âyatullâh's authority in the Islamic Constitution of The Republic of Iran, in order to "rectify European – and Japanese – incomprehension." But at the same time, he repeatedly made the strange assertion that as a consequence of Khomeinî's *fatwa* of Feb. 14, 1989, attacks on the Moslem emigrants from India and Pakistan to Europe as well as violent riots provoked in reaction to *The Satanic Verses*, were for the moment appeased ("The Affair of *The Satanic Verses*", *Eureka*, Nov. 1989: 156; "Iranian Requiem", Igarashi 1990: 69; "Emâm and Tenno", Igarashi 1990: 177).

This remark by Igarashi is hardly justified. We know that the controversy surrounding the legality of the death sentence – which Igarashi himself found dubious – provoked not only religious discussions in the meeting of the Sunni nations' foreign ministers (March 13-16, 1989) but also a religious murder in Belgium on March 29 of 1989, and that the worst riot relative to the Rushdie affair occurred in his native Bombay on February 24, 10 days after the issue of the *fatwa*. This riot caused 12 casualties and more than 500 arrests. Not only this riot but also another one at the Karachi airport, on March 4, were provoked by pro-Iranian Shi'ite fundamentalists. How could Igarashi overlook these facts? (See my chronicle-critique "An Overview of the Reactions to the Rushdie

Affair", in *Eureka*, Nov. 1989, p: 178-79). It seems clear that Igarashi was less informed about Indian and Pakistani realities than about the Islamic Revolution in Iran, which he had observed closely.

But Igarashi's proposition for the "possible solution" of the affair (the second point mentioned above) is more intriguing. Igarashi declared that Japan should "intervene", as he put it, between the Western world and the Islamic world. Instead of merely observing as a spectator the conflict in its irreconcilable hostility, Japan should see it as its task to take part in it. Neither Western nor Moslem, Japanese are free from the political usurpation suffered by the novelist (especially in England and in India). Japan could therefore serve as a neutral judge of the affair as a third party. As a consequence, the Rushdie affair would transcend the level of a power struggle between the Western World and the Islamic World, and it would assume "authentically international dimensions", according to Igarashi.

To "internationalize" the affair in this way, the publication of a reliable Japanese translation would serve as a necessary touchstone to establish, according to Igarashi, a mutual respect between Emâm Khomeinî and Mr. Rushdie, and which would hopefully bring the deadlock to an end. ("Why did I", Igarashi 1990: 20). Because of this "interventionist" attitude – something 'excessive' for 'ordinary' Japanese, who would rather keep a respectful distance from international affairs rather than offer their own opinion of them – Igarashi seems to have gotten the reputation as a trouble maker in Japan (where making trouble for whatever reasons – even for justice – is the last thing to be recommended, as the Reason is synonymous with harmony in Japanese Society).

By "internationalize," moreover, Igarashi also meant to "internationalize" such intimidated Japanese public opinion. The Japanese translation was not intended as a provocation toward Islamic people but was requested, according to Igarashi, in order to make proof of Japanese readers' conscience and sense of responsibility in a society where "les grandes maisons d'édition japonaises, plus souvent qu'à leur tour, laissent moisir dans leurs tiroirs des manuscrits susceptibles de froisser un tantinet les susceptibilités

de l'ordre établi ou de placer dans l'embarras un gouvernement japonais qui a toujours mené une diplomatie pro-arabe, pétrole oblige" (*Libération*, 14 July, '91).

Igarashi's Japanese translation of *The Satanic Verses* was intended to criticize Japanese society, where so-called "voluntary self-control and restraint" ("jishuku") are anonymously imposed – because nobody knows by whom it is imposed – as a conspiracy unanimously accepted, and where such "self-imposed controls" are silently ordered by invisible authorities under the pretext of "exterior pressures" ("gaiatsu") (as was the case in the Structural Impediment Initiative Talks between the U.S. and the Japanese governments on trade unbalances), automatically repressing individual opinions. By "inter-nationalizing" the Rushdie affair, Igarashi hoped to do away with such domestic insularism typically observed in Japanese society.

We can now understand the extent of Igarashi's somewhat megalomaniacal ambition: his translation of the Rushdie's novel was intended to put the Rushdie affair to an end, reconciling the West and Islam, while urging the Japanese public to be genuinely "internationalized" at the same time.

Atsumi Kenji, specialist in Middle Eastern studies, severely criticized Igarashi's lack of prudence and self-restraint, which, according to him, are indispensable in maintaining "international relations" with Islam. An unconditional freedom of expression is "for Japanese consumption only" and is not relevant in "international society," Atsumi argues. Igarashi's response to the affair was typically Japanese, Atsumi continues, as if Igarashi had forgotten what Islam was all about. It's time for Japanese, Atsumi generalizes, to learn how to enter into good terms with other nations. In conclusion Atsumi says that putting one's nose in another's religious affair is a "forbidden intervention," and that "Igarashi was involved in a religious war because he violated this taboo with typically Japanese insensitivity regarding religious matters" (Atsumi Kenji, "Strange Martyrdom of Professor Igarashi", *Bungeishunju*, September '91: 196-204).

Atsumi's opinion, summarized above, is in itself typically Japanese. Firstly, it was not Igarashi, as we have seen, but main American public opinion, which advocated unconditional freedom of expression in the Rushdie affair. Taking American opinion to be Japan's own is a typical Japanese confusion. Secondly, the idea of being on good terms with other nations without explicitly demonstrating one's own principles is itself a typical pattern of Japanese diplomacy (which is hardly understandable out of Japan). It is not Igarashi's "intervention" but, rather, Atsumi's uncritical and compromising attitude toward other nations which does compromise Japan's reputation in international relations. Thirdly, it was not from any "typically Japanese lack of prudence" that Igarashi was in danger but the fact is that Igarashi played the role of a "convicted criminal" in the name of "Islamic radical thought", as we shall see.

Yet, in Atsumi's criticism toward Igarashi, three questions must be retained. *Firstly*, what did Igarashi's "imprudence" consist of? Igarashi had explained that Khomeinî himself would have preferred such open criticism as Igarashi's (offered as a Japanese Islamic scholar and Shintoist!: Igarashi 1990: 59; 1989: 4-5) to the insidious suggestions Rushdie is allegedly said to have inserted in his fiction toward Islam. Moreover, Igarashi was not a believer. Islamic law is applicable only to the faithful. From a theoretical understanding, therefore, Igarashi, as an outsider and non-believer, could enjoy unconditional freedom in criticizing Islam, so long as he remained outside its jurisdiction.

To justify himself Igarashi invoked the first Imâm Alî's tolerant acceptance of non-believers' criticism toward Islam. According to Atsumi, however, "it would be tolerable to speak ill of Islam out of ignorance," "but in no other country except Japan is it possible for a non-believer with highly specialized knowledge of Islam to continue to question publicly the core of Islam" (Ibid.).

Yet, Atsumi does not make clear why Igarashi's knowledge of Islam deprived him of the right to criticize it. In my opinion, the paradox Atsumi failed to mention is the following: According to the Islamic logic, for example, it is not criminal to criticize Islam

from a purely Christian point of view – whether it is doctrinal or apologetical – because it doesn't bother the Moslem community, and because this Christian point of view reveals in itself its ignorance of the Last Revelation brought forth by Islam. But it is a logical tautology that a non-believer can question Islam from the Islamic point of view (as Igarashi tried to do from his "sincerity" to Islam), because a non-believer is a non-believer in so far as he does not know what Islam is about.

Ironically enough therefore, Igarashi's way of re-examining the relevance of the *Fatwa* by respecting the Islamic criteria proved to be more treacherous to Islam than to criticize Islam as an "ignorant" exterior Christianized European (or as an ignorant Europeanized Oriental individual). Igarashi's intention to be faithful to Islamic inner logic in his judgment on the Rushdie Affair was doomed to faithlessness, as soon as it was judged in the Islamic inner logic he hoped to respect. Didn't Igarashi notice this paradox, or did he deliberately ignore it, with his invocation of Imam Ali's tolerant acceptance of non-believers' sincere advice to the Moslem Um'ma community?

Secondly, this intellectual alienation inherent in Igarashi's exegesis on Islam was reinforced by his intellectual stance toward non-philological realities of the Islamic societies. This gap between theoretical understanding and practical Islamic customs is typically epitomized by the fact that Igarashi's writings in Japanese were products destined for Japanese consumption only. The more authentic his interpretation of Islam is, the more Igarashi is caught in a kind of "domesticated orientalist" monopoly of the "knowledge of the other", aggravating psychological oppositions between "us" and "them"; between ex-colonialist Japan as economic superpower and immigrant foreign workers suffering from Japanese "exploitation". This dilemma was more exaggerated in the case of the Middle East, as there is a sharp divergence and conflict between intellectual life and popular (and possibly illiterate) culture, as Igarashi had reported himself (see Igarashi 1984).

His deeper understanding of Islam could aggravate the Moslem population's misunderstanding of him. A typical example of this is the Islamic dance performance Igarashi staged in Japan. For Igarashi, the *dhikr* of *Mevlevî* in Jalâl al-Dîn Rumî's tradition (known as Whirling Dervishes) was the culminating form of Islamic mysticism. In criticizing the recent commercialization of the dance by Konya municipality in Turkey, Igarashi reminded us of Sohrevardi: "raqs bar hâlast ast, wa na hâlat bar raqs" ("awakening lies in the dance, but the dance does not lie in awakening"; *halât* being a state of awakening which stems from the verb *hâra*, "to change", etymologically justifying the ecstasy in *dhikr* as a moment of "transcordiatio", according to Igarashi's neologism which replaces "trans-formatio") (Igarashi 1984: 108-114; 1989: 108-109; the last chapter treating entirely the *dhikr*, see esp: 130-153).

For Igarashi, the Sufi *dhikr* dance and the so-called "belly dance" were complementary – masculine form being centripetal and female form being centrifugal – and this complementarity had to be understood both in performance and in the philosophical meaning it conveys. In this way, Igarashi tried to refute the European prejudice of *dhikr* as "mysterious and fanatic" and belly dance as a sensual exhibitionist performance of striptease.

It was partly based on this understanding, that Igarashi staged an opera (1988) and a kind of commedia-divina drama of his own, "Emâm", with belly dance performance in it. However, his staging was not welcomed but resented by some representatives of immigrant Moslems in Japan. The effort of communication by a foreign intellectual, was nothing but a shameless spectacle for the native people. This is also one of the reasons why Rushdie's novel gave rise to scandal in England shortly after its publication. The novel was estimated as "literature of self-mutilation by an exile who cut off his own flesh to offer it to the host culture which accepted him" (Hamadi Eshid, *Le Monde diplomatique*, juin 1989: our translation from French).

This resistance to communication typical in cross-cultural relations was all the more complicated in this case, as the stage setting was a psychiatric hospital with characters alluding to the

Prophet's family and Iranian political leaders today. The "commedia" immediately had provocative impact upon some immigrant Moslems in Japan as if it were the Japanese version of "Iranian Night" at the Royal Court in London.

Igarashi's intention seems complex, if not contradictory. In spite of its (uselessly or intended) risky appearance, the content of the "commedia" was seriously philosophical, exploring – what is worse – the reversible limit of sanity (in the clinic) and insanity (of the real politics out of the clinic). Igarashi also seems to have intended to show that entertainment is harmless to Islamic belief. However, his demonstration gave the impression that Igarashi was mischievously aiming at transgression under the pretext of entertainment. By playing on the limit of Islamic tolerance, under the circumstances, he offended some leading immigrant Moslem representatives in Japan.

His staging (of which we don't have any definitive scenario, as Igarashi changed the detail at the last moment of rehearsal) shows one dilemma in cross-cultural communication: the outsiders are not entitled to judge if Moslems' resentment is justifiable or not. Yet if the Islam *extrémistes* start to "punish" all that they find offensive as the enemy of Islam, there would be no limit. To avoid this vicious circle, it is necessary to introduce a margin of tolerance. However, this margin cannot be imposed from the outside; it must be established from within. As a "neutral" Islamic student, Igarashi intended to make of his "commedia-divina" a shock absorber. But a shock absorber must receive the shock. The author also incarnates in himself the friction which he tried to neutralize. Is it a lucid choice or a pervasive drive to self-destruction to accept such an unprofitable, disadvantageous and thankless task?

Anyhow, this renders Igarashi's position ambiguous and his identity uncertain. No less than Rushdie, Igarashi himself became transgression incarnated. Indeed, how could his piece be an innocent parody of and friendly satire on Iranian leaders, and demonstrate at the same time part of Islamic cultural potentiality for tolerance. Igarashi seems to have put all these contradictions into

his play. Even if his attempt at proving the inner tolerance of Islam by his "innocent" Iranian comedy had been successful, this success itself would have constituted a transgression from within Islam. A deeper insight into Islam from one side can be a worse violation to Islam from the other.

Thirdly, it was the conjunction of these above-mentioned two factors that made Igarashi's voluntary involvement in the Rushdie affair all the more critical. After the affair, Igarashi began to publish fictional letters addressed to Emâm Khomeinî in order to criticize, openly but gently, Emâm's several "misdirections" – the *fatwa* in question to begin with ("Letters to Âyatullâh Khomeinî" in Igarashi 1990: 22-72) – to which Igarashi proposed some alternatives by quoting from the Qur'an, as argumentation for its own sake. Whether or not he was serious or just joking is an open question. To whom he was really addressing these letters is no more clear.

His advice might have been nothing more than a purely intellectual game. Even if Emâm Khomeinî was not infallible, as Igarashi's theological interpretation argued, this does not deprive most of the Shi'ite Moslems of their obligation to Khomeinî's orders (as Igarashi's interpretation of The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran suggests (Igarashi 1990: 46-52)). In spite of his detailed knowledge of social, economic and politico-religious issues in Iran, Igarashi's argument looks purely meta-physical, as if he were engaging in a platonic dialogue with the *failasûf* Khomeinî (Khomeinî the philosopher). It curiously lacks an appreciation of the complex reality of everyday Moslem life, as if Igarashi were believing that his "summit" with the Emâm would solve all the Iranian problems, including the Rushdie affair.

We can detect here another peculiarity of Igarashi's stance as an intellectual: anti-authoritarianism. He openly questioned "*credo ut intelligam*" and, contrary to the prevailing interpretation in Christian theology, he advanced as his personal conviction "*intelligo ut credam*" (Igarashi 1989: 5-6): "I don't care what a sage says, I don't mind with what kind of authority a bishop preaches. I simply look

into the resulting '*écriture*' to search for the way to become '*ho tou theou philos*', as Plato said, but with the stupid generosity which I love" (Igarashi 1989: 35; 1986: 80-84).

His apparent imprudence and arrogance was part of this conviction, and he ran the risk which his conviction deserved. He is reported to have said: "Before the attack the Moslem challenges you by discussion. I shall never be beaten by discussion. So I shall not be killed" (reported and quoted in "Interview to Salman Rushdie", *Gekkan Asahi*, September, 1992: 66).

So far we have examined three problems which undermine Igarashi's pretention of being a "neutral arbitrator" in the Rushdie affair, between Emâm Khomeinî and Mr. Rushdie.

Posed in the context of the incommensurable value system (his second problem still to be examined), Igarashi's arbitration appears still more arbitrary. The ambiguity of Igarashi's arguments that we summarized with inevitable ambiguity certainly stems from the fundamental incommensurability inherent in the Rushdie affair, which Igarashi tried to make commensurable by force.

In his analysis Igarashi did not fail to mention the incommensurability incorporated in Salman Rushdie's double identity: a naturalized English citizen who at the same time is an ex-Moslem apostate, from the Islamic Um'ma viewpoint. As a scholar, Igarashi reasonably pointed out the discrepancy between Islamic Law and Western law. The *fatwa* can legitimately order the "purge" of shameful renegades in the name of Islam, but the current Western law system finds such a "purge" to be a violation of international law. A person to be judged in the name of Islam, Rushdie is at the same time to be protected as an English citizen in the United Kingdom (despite his hatred of the Thatcher administration).

This duplication was multiplied as the affair got complicated. On the one hand, Rushdie's novel's 'evilness' won't justify massive assassinations by Moslems fundamentalists, but it is nonetheless true, on the other side, that the freedom Rushdie enjoyed in England caused in India and Pakistan many "innocent casualties," Rushdie is not judged responsible, nor felt any sorrow for. And yet it is a short-circuit argument to declare (as did

many American news media) Rushdie's total innocence by the fact that he was sentenced to death by Emâm Khomeinî. It is also undeniable that many riots in England and India were no more caused by the *fatwa* than by the novel itself. On the contrary, the *fatwa* was issued because the Emâm's authority did not permit him to keep silence any longer on the riots provoked – or manipulated – in reaction to, or under the pretext of, Rushdie's novel.

In my opinion, the real achievement of Rushdie affair resides in its revelation of such contradictions inscribed in its own destiny in the so-called post-modern borderless world. There is a vicious circle between restricting liberty by reason of religious sacrilege and encouraging sacrilege for the sake of liberty. The Rushdie affair (if not Rushdie's novel) revealed this. It was one thing to regard the Khomeini's death sentence as criminal (not necessarily criminal within Islamic jurisdiction), it was another to promote the freedom of expression as an inviolable and invaluable dogmatic creed of democracy (not necessarily valid world-wide), but these two independent issues were strangely short-circuited and agglutinated around the novel, and the confusion was all the more intricate in that any legal criterion to settle the affair was not found anywhere.

With this problematical confusion of two independent issues, *The Satanic Verses* ceased to be a literary work and was reduced to a propaganda machine for "Freedom of expression", as Tehran had suspected with some pertinence. The novel was no more than "empty symbols: symbols that at the same time are the prisoners of a Western liberal conscience and hostages to an Islamic fundamentalist orthodoxy (Homi Bhabha, in *New Statesman*, March, '89). "freedom of expression has become a fetish", and Rushdie is brought "into the position of enforced martyrdom" (John Ezzard, *Guardian*, March, 7, 1989). Rushdie was "punished" precisely for his merit of revealing – by his book written in English – this incommensurable contradiction which had remained concealed until then (If he were an Arabic or Iranian writer, he would simply have "disappeared" without notice by the Western press). As a border-

line case, he was exposed (“irradiated” as he wrote in “Out of the Whale”) to the danger he revealed himself but this danger had taken root in his own uprooted and alienated existence.

This image of deracinated existence reminds us of a famous elegy by Rûmî, *Song of the Reed*, which Igarashi repeatedly quoted. The mystical poet listens to the reed which sings the sorrow of its deracinated vagabondage. So long as it could stay on the reed field where it grew, it could not sing. To become a musical instrument it must be cut off. But the music it now plays is the song of pain it experienced. The poet shares with the reed the sorrow of parting. Every human being is nothing but a reed, deracinated from its Ground. Its “presence” bears witness to an “absence”, just like a flute which has lost its beloved player.

be-shnaw-în nay chûn shekâyat mî-konad
 az jodâ'î-hâ hekâyat mî-konad
 k'az nayistân tâ ma-râ bebrîde' and
 dar nafîr-am mard o zan nâlîde'and
 sîne khâham sharhe sharhê' az ferâq
 tâ be-gûyam sharh-e dard-ê 'eshtiyâq
 har kasî k'û d r mând-az asl-e khîsh
 bâz jûyad rûzgâr-e wasl-e khîsh

Mathnawî-ye MaCnawî

(“Listen to the reed how it tells a tale, complaining of separations – saying, ‘Ever since I was parted from the reed-bed, my lament hath caused man and woman to moan./ I want a bosom torn by severance, that I may unfold (to such a one) the pain of love-desire./ Every one who is left far from his source wishes back the time when he was united with it’”)

(transcribed by Igarashi from the Tehran edition established by Badî' z-Zamân Furûzânfar in Igarashi 1989: 220; Igarashi 1986: 97-100. See also, Igarashi 1990: 220-223, 230-237; 1989: 148-149, 153, 218-221; with English translation by R. A. Nicholson: *The Mathnawî of Jalalu'd din Rumi*, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Trust, 1926)

Although Igarashi never mentioned this elegy in discussing Salman Rushdie, the resonance between the two seems undeniable. We can probably detect here Igarashi's hidden sympathy to Salman Rushdie, as an exiled expatriate writer.

Igarashi's sympathy for Rushdie would be justified, Imâm Khomeinî's *fatwa* would be proved to be an overreaction to the novel, as Igarashi hoped to prove, and it would be a mistake to make of Rushdie a hero of Western freedom of expression, but these alone do not liquidate the whole "affair". Whether the affair was provoked by the troublemaking novel, or the novel was put into trouble for political purposes, the fact remains that the novel was troublesome in so far as it gave way to political manipulations: And once manipulated, it was too late and irremediable.

In England the novel was from the beginning the victim of a political exploitation. In India, immediately after the publication, the late President Rajiv Gandhi had already been forced, under Islamic pressure, to ban the publication, "for security reasons", while the general election was on the agenda. Salman Rushdie immediately protested against the fact that *The Satanic Verses* was "used as political football" by some "politicians", but Syed Shahabuddin, one of the Moslem representatives, sternly riposted that he would never waste his time reading such a "religious pornography" promoted by the "colonialism in literature" (*The Rushdie File*, : 43-49).

Igarashi seems no more troubled by these Indian situations than Iranian political issues. When I began to write this essay, I was still puzzled: Why such an experienced scholar as Igarashi did not mention any geopolitical necessities which would have lead Âyatullâh Khomeinî and his surroundings to pronounce a *fatwa* deliberately destined to aggravate Iran's conflict with, and isolation from, the Western World?

If anything the *fatwa* was one of the measures (if not pretexts) for controlling (if not manipulating) public opinion in favor of the Islamic Revolution, which was in danger. From the geopolitical point of view, India and Pakistan were crucial strategic vacuums, where both Sun'nite and Shi'ite fundamentalists were still struggling to establish their initiative: after having failed to take over Mecca twice from Saudi Arabia, after having spent 8 years in the Iran-Iraq war without victory, it was time for Iran to "frame up" a "sign of newly conspired Western total arrogance and sacrilege

toward the Islamic Republic of Iran." (Ayatullah Montazeri's speech on Feb. 25, 1989, shortly after the communiqué of 12 E.C. nations in Brussel on Feb. 20, condemning the "incitement to murder" by Iran as "an unacceptable violation of the most elementary principles and obligations which govern relations among sovereign states"). It was only by staging such Islamic crisis that the Islamic Revolution could survive (see for further details, my paper mentioned above: *Eureka*, Nov. 1989: 177-180).

Why did Igarashi pass over these political backgrounds in silence (cf. Igarashi 1990: 177)? It was only in the course of my investigation that I found Igarashi's own explanation to his translation of the Rushdie's novel: "In my opinion, scholars and those who are engaged in culture should refrain from thinking of what could eventually happen in consequence of their own scholarly work" (quoted from "Interview to Saluman Rushdie", *Gekkan Asahi*, September, 1992: 67).

It was therefore not by ignorance but by intention that Igarashi tried to transfer political discussions into the realm of literature. Does this mean, however, a retreat from the real battlefield? Or, is it instead, as a token of his total engagement with Islam that Igarashi hoped to settle the affair in the realm of "*écriture*"? For a devoted philologist with artistic sensibility and ambition, was this operation a desperate utopian dream, strictly limited to fictional world of art and literature? Was the Japanese translation of the novel a kind of wizard wand to realize this magic?

As a matter of fact, "*l'écriture*" is the term Igarashi used as a translation of Persian *hekâyat*, a kind of parable, where he saw – as was the case of the "Song of the Reed" – the interface between "presence" and "absence"; *zâhir* and *bâtin* (Igarashi 1990: 207); a non-Christian version of the duality between *deus revelatus* and *deus absconditus* (Igarashi 1989: 47, 59)). Does this fundamental duality of the phenomenon neutralize the incommensurability in question, as the apparent failure (in reality) can be a hidden success (in literature)?

In reading his most monumental and academic work, the *Study of Iḥṣān* (Avicenna) (1989), we can easily be convinced that Igarashi had long been prepared to devote his life to the Islamic cause. He deliberately and "radically" "imitated" the intellectual heritage of Islamic philosophers. Following Aristotle ("*secundum intentionem Aristotelis*"), Iḥṣān refused to separate theory from praxis but comprehended them as two spheres of one and the same medical discipline. In the same sense, Igarashi conceived his own intellectual responsibility as constituting an inseparable whole of "engagement" with his social existence:

"Under violently shaky circumstances, at the center of turmoil, a man exposing himself to harsh criticism, or even risking his own life, breaks through the crisis with intelligence. This responsibility makes of him a 'particular point', in its geometrical sense of the word. The Islamic history and heritage is a complex composed of locus of these particular points" (Igarashi 1989a: 278-79). And among these Islamic intellectuals in crisis ("*Harj-o Marji*" under the Revolution) he did not fail to mention the late Āyatullāh Khomeinī with due respect (Igarashi 1983: 4-9; "Iranian Requiem", Igarashi 1990: 60-71). Igarashi also reminds us that the charge (*amāna*) in Arabic is derived from belief (*imān*).

This sense of responsibility in crisis is directly connected with his attitude in research. "Etymologically, criticism stems from *krînô* an act of choosing. To choose the best at the risk of one's own life and under one's own responsibility, as Odysseus did before his long voyage. The criticism is a critical act in the crisis" (Igarashi 1983: 4; 1984: 176).

This critical attitude explains Igarashi's critical distance from Islam, which can be compared to Simone Weil's dissident stance to Catholicism. This dissident standpoint also explains his eccentric and heretic sympathy, empathy or compathy for the Islamic Revolution. "Eccentric means a person who differs from others but equals to the heaven's principle, according to Chinese Taoist philosopher Zhuang Zi (368 B.C.-290 B.C.)," (Igarashi 1989: 212; our literal translation). The translation of *The Satanic Verses*, ap-

parently anti-Islamic, must be situated in this general critical economy of Igarashi's passionate and "eccentric" commitment to Islam.

Igarashi's resolution of taking the role of impossible mediator in the Rushdie affair was doomed to failure. But this resolution was deeply inscribed in him. Instead of retreating from the burning issue, he rather hoped "to be burnt up in the Islamic pathos", which he tried to discern with logic (Igarashi 1983: 13-14; 1986: iii-iv, 77). This "patho-logical" engagement, as Igarashi wittily put it himself, was by definition "pathological" and self-destructive. It inevitably provoked hatred as well as admiration and finally made of him an enigmatic Islamic martyr – in the double sense of the word: devotion to the Islamic cause as well as its victim.

But those who are initiated in mystical poetry in the Islamic tradition will certainly understand some metaphysical tone in Igarashi's resolution: so long as you stay outside the fire, you, a moth, cannot know what the fire is; but once you know what the fire is, you cannot survive your initiation to the secret; and your experience remains enigmatic because you cannot communicate the secret you got in the fire to those who stay outside the fire (Igarashi 1989: 114; cf. Hideaki Sugita, "Aspiration of the moth – the Islamic World and Japan", *Comparative culture*, University of Tokyo, Nr. 24, 1992: 169-198; English summary: "The Allegory of the Moth and Candle in Comparative Perspective", 200-202).

Yet Igarashi did not recommend the total surrender to the temptation of self-sacrifice: on the contrary, in his text "Beyond Self-Sacrifice", Igarashi strictly refuses "self-sacrifice as a purpose" but only admits the "sacrifice as a result". By quoting from the case of al Hallāj – who was executed as having identified himself with God – in the Islamic mystical heretic tradition (Igarashi 1989: 115), he said that the danger in one's task cannot be confused with the blind *Todestrieb* enchantment. He gives a striking parable:

"If the recommendation of self-sacrifice resulted in skipping the necessary preparation and precision, the consequence would be awful. For example, not only those who claim the safety of nuclear power plants but also anti-nuclear activists would hasten to sacrifice themselves in order to explode these nuclear power plants: those who claim its safety

would do that in order to prove the safety in question; the anti-nuclear activists also do the same, in order to reveal the danger of these nuclear plants" (Igarashi 1989: 188).

In order to suggest the way to avoid the danger of such blind self-sacrifice, Igarashi refers to the uncomplete and enigmatic fragment of a tale for children written by a Japanese Buddhist visionary poet Kenji Miyazawa (1896-1933): "The Clothes seen by the scholar Aramharad" (the name evokes *'âlam-ehrad*: "world of wisdom", in Persian). "To the teacher Aramharad's approval that 'many people sacrifice their lives for the truth and the justice', a youngest disciple Searabad, a little surprised, makes calmly the following remark: 'one cannot help thinking of what really good thing is' (Serabad would be *serr-e bâd*: "wind of the secret"). From this passage Igarashi deduces the following lesson: "Stories of heroic self-sacrifice certainly move you to tears, but the tears blur your eyes: to overcome such dangerous self-intoxication, Kenji Miyazawa teaches us that 'we have to have a will to know the truth' which opens your mind's eye to the new world" (Igarashi 1989: 124, 190-193).

This reminds us of Luis Bunuel's saying: "I would give my life for a man who is looking for the truth. But I would gladly kill a man who thinks he has found the truth".

"The history shows from the Ages of prophets and philosophers that the important task of the intellectuals was to perceive the crisis and give warning of it. To know the crisis seems to be one of the essential characteristics of knowledge. But history also shows in many cases that such intellectuals risked and lost their lives because of their knowledge. The knowledge of crisis also brings forth the crisis of knowledge" (Igarashi 1983: 4; cf. Igarashi 1984: 56; 1991: 158-159. Igarashi borrows the notion of "Chain of Knowledge" (*silsilat al-hikma*) partly from Ibn Arabî's *Fusûs al-Hikma*. cf. Igarashi 1983: 10, 146).

It was in this sense of "total surrender" to the search for the truth that Igarashi, as an intellectual initiated in Islamic wisdom, was ready to die. And even if the translation of *The Satanic Verses* was the fatal job for him, it was at most one of the tasks in which

he was ready to risk his life. Therefore, his apparently "suicidal" commitment in the affair was neither defeatism, heroism, nor adventurism. Rather this attitude was based on the detachment from and the resignation to fate: "idhâ jâ ajaluhum, fa lâ yasta 'khirûna sâ 'atan wa lâ yastaqdimûna" (*Al Qur'an*, X-49). Igarashi observed this attitude not only in the treatises and mystical stories by Sohrawardi's *On the State of Childness* (*Oeuvres philosophiques et mystiques*, Tome III, Teheran & Paris, 1974) but also in the everyday behavior of Iranians: *qadâ o quadar* (Igarashi 1989: 110-113). He called it "kakugo" (which means at the same time "resolution", "resignation" and "readiness" in Japanese); and characterized it as "a program in which its own death is already input, and which envisages through its own death the resurrection or the renaissance" (Igarashi 1986: 216-217; cf. Igarashi 1991: 164).

Igarashi tried to save *The Satanic Verses* from its political abuse and resurrect it in the *Republique des lettres*. This reminds us of John Keats saying of *King Lear*: "the excellence of every Art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate, from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth" (quoted by Igarashi 1989b: 182-83, where he was giving a critical account of a famous Japanese nationalist hero, Shoin Yoshida (1830-1859), who was executed by the Tokugawa Shogunate at the dawn of Japan's opening to the West, before realizing his dream of the Enlightenment of Japan²). Was Igarashi's dream of "Beauty and Truth" redeemed by his death? Was all his effort for Art negative?

Indeed "negative capability" was one of Igarashi's key-terms, which he borrowed from the same English Romantic poet speaking of *Hamlet*. Copying Keat's own definition: "Negative Capability, that is when man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact & reason," Igarashi reinterpreted the term in his way as follows: "the capability or the resolution of accepting negative matters and taking charge of it" (Igarashi 1990: iv; 1986: 105-106, 213-216). In another place, he also pointed to Foster's "negative virtues" (Igarashi 1989). After World War II, Foster talked about the necessity of tolerance;

attitude of “not being huffy, touchy, irritable, revengeful” (“Tolerance”, in *Two Cheers for Democracy*, 1951, quoted by Igarashi 1990: 192-204).

To set a conciliation between irreconcilables – this impossible task was a suicidal commitment, indeed. For tolerance is forceless if confronted by intolerance (If you are intolerant to intolerance, you are intolerant; if you are tolerant to intolerance, you accept intolerance). But Igarashi believed in such a “negative capability” of tolerance. The irony was that his tolerance was intolerable for those whom he wanted to tolerate. But the logic of “negative capability” was ready to accept – with detachment and resignation – this logical defeat of tolerance.

It was not my intention, from the beginning, to make of Hitoshi Igarashi a tragic hero. I rather intended to situate Igarashi as one of the “particular points in the geometrical locus of Islamic intellectual history”. At the margin of the Islamic “singularity complex” (Igarashi 1986: 218; 1990: 89), between the spheres of *pathos* and *logos*, he now certainly occupies a legitimately “singular” and marginal position (the margin being indispensable for machinery to function). To finish let me quote from the following Shakespeare’s verses *en guise de* tribute to the “negative capability” our late Japanese young scholar witnessed in living and dying in the role of Hamlet in the power struggle between Free Society and Holy Islam:

Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince;
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!

from Hamlet quoted by Igarashi (1986: 107)

Notes

An extensive list of Hitoshi Igarashi's publications has been prepared by Mrs. Masako Igarashi.

"A List of Works of Hitoshi Igarashi" *Gengobunka Ronshu* (Studies in Languages and Cultures), No. 37. Institute of Modern Languages and Cultures, University of Tsukuba, 1993. p. 251-266. It must be mentioned that any further reading of Igarashi's work will modify our hypothesis presented here.

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1. It is true that Igarashi here failed to demonstrate logically his reservations regarding the freedom of expression. But, his last book on the Gulf Crisis lets us know what he meant in discussing the Declaration of Human Rights. Igarashi reported that John Lennon's "Imagine", the theme song of Yoko Ono's "Greening of the World" movement, was "banned as an anti-war propaganda song in the United States (and in The United Kingdom) broadcasting during the Gulf Crisis" (We don't know if Igarashi's information is true). If it were the case, the so-called "freedom of expression" was a simple illusion and did not exist in America! Moreover, the so-called incompatibility of the two value systems was, according to Igarashi, also an illusion Washington was struggling to impose on the world, in spite of the objection made by the former Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance. In Igarashi's imagination, the assassination of John Lennon in 1980 also seemed to be connected with this danger of America the "international justice which Washington advocates." (Igarashi 1990: 190-205; Igarashi 1991: 51-57). However, Igarashi's hatred of Washington decision-makers' camouflaged manipulation and his strong fear of "the blindness of the American totalitarian cult of democracy" (especially since Iran Gate) did not imply that he advanced a pro-Iranian campaign against the "Evil Empire." On the contrary, he found in this recognition an ample justification for the outspoken criticism toward Iranian religious authorities, as we shall see.

2. In rereading his books, we can see his deep sympathy toward those historical figures who were doomed for their principles in each given historical situation. Yoshida Shoin (1830-59), a famous scholar and political reader executed by the Tokugawa Shogunate authority, with many of his disciples later becoming political leaders in modernizing Japan, is a typical case. In 1854, Shoin tried to stow away with one of his colleague in Commodore Perry's American steamer. Under the policy of

isolation, such illegal crossing deserved to death. If arrested, he would be executed. But the young Japanese badly needed direct information about Western countries. He simply wanted to "study". The Americans who interrogated them about their purpose were strongly impressed by their "intense desire for information" and found the Japanese "an inquiring people" who risk their life "for the sake of adding to their knowledge" (Francis L. Hawks, *Narrative of The Expedition of an American Squadron to the China Sea and Japan...*, Washington, 1856: 420-423). Shoin risked his life for the sake of his "will to know the truth." In this choice (if not in this historical figure who was going to die tragically), Igarashi found an example of "negative capability", worthy of being followed (Igarashi 1989b: 175-7; cf. Igarashi 1991: 168-77).

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